



Nordic Council
of Ministers

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE NORDIC FOOD INNOVATION SUMMIT

A summit to inspire and set a course



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<https://pub.norden.org/nord2025-002>



A SUMMIT TO INSPIRE AND SET COURSE

With awareness of the pressing challenges facing our food system, 65 key actors from across the Nordic region gathered in Malmö on 3–4 December 2024 for a two-day innovation summit. The participants were chefs, bakers, farmers, producers, educators, researchers, entrepreneurs, activists, writers, and more.

The aim was to activate the collective knowledge, experience, and creativity of the group to set forth shared ambitions and suggest concrete initiatives for collaboration.

At the conclusion of the summit, the initiatives developed were presented for the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Karen Ellemann.

This report summarises the work done by the 65 summit participants. [See participant list in appendix.](#)

The Summit was hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in collaboration with Nordic Agri Research (NKJ), Madkulturen and Meyers Madhus.

The summit opened with a live-streamed session featuring a number of speakers, including Karen Ellemann, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers; Kim Kielsen, Minister for Business and the Environment (Ministry of Fishing and Hunting), Greenland, Elin Röö, Associate Professor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; Rasmus Willig, Head of Suhrs Højskole and Chairperson of Andelsgaarde; Frida Nilsson, Chef; Hanne Lene Dahlgren, Author and Food Influencer; Anders Drottja, Political Advisor to the Swedish Minister for Rural Affairs; and Claus Meyer, Culinary Entrepreneur.

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Our food systems are essential for the green transition, the resilience of our societies and for the health and well-being of our inhabitants. But we have some work to do. The New Nordic Food Movement has established a unique platform to lead the way. We all need to utilize it, for the sake of our planet and our personal well-being.

Karen Ellemann

Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers



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We need to remember that what we cannot produce in peace times, we cannot expect to produce in times of crisis and conflict.

Anders Drottja, Political Advisor to the Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden

WELCOME TO...
NORDIC
FOOD
INNOVATION
SUMMIT



[Video link \(vimeo.com/1063580987?share=copy#t=0\)](https://vimeo.com/1063580987?share=copy#t=0)



BUILDING ON THE NEW NORDIC FOOD MOVEMENT

In 2004, the launch of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto ignited a transformation of the Nordic food landscape. The Nordic Kitchen Manifesto was conceived in 2004 under the leadership of Claus Meyer and Jan Kragh Jacobsen. It lists ten key values including: simplicity, seasonality, identity, transparent supply chains, biodiversity, deliciousness, healthiness, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, innovation, inclusion, interdependency and co-creation. And with our shared ethical responsibility for the destiny of our food culture as the overarching theme.

While the Nordic Food Movement has been a success by any standard, the vision that guides it still holds a great deal of unrealised potential. The core principles of the movement have become guiding stars for many chefs and food entrepreneurs across the Nordic countries. However, the values are not fully integrated into our societies and food culture in general as shown by the [impact analysis of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto](#) (report in Danish).

Today's food systems and food culture must be understood against a backdrop of very serious challenges: global warming, the loss of biodiversity and a health crisis driven largely by a high prevalence of overweight and obesity leading to non-communicable diseases are some of the "wicked problems" facing us today. All of these issues are closely interwoven with the way we produce and consume food. In addressing these challenges, we have multiple strengths to build on in the Nordics. Talent and innovation capacity, strong institutions, a high level of trust and co-operation across society, and broad aspirations of sustainable farming and business practices. On top of that, we have an incredible success story about a region transitioning from culinary obscurity to a global epicentre of deliciousness in just two decades.

New Nordic Food Manifesto

1. To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate to our region.
2. To reflect the changes of the seasons in the meal we make.
3. To base our cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics are particularly in our climates, landscapes and waters.
4. To combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being.
5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers - and to spread the word about their underlying cultures.
6. To promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild.
7. To develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products.
8. To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.
9. To combine local self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products.
10. To join forces with consumer representatives, other cooking craftsmen, agriculture, fishing, food, retail and wholesales industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and authorities on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries.



FOOD IS BOTH THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

By most estimates, global food systems account for about one third of the world's total carbon emissions and the use of 70% of our freshwater resources.^[1] About half of the global GDP and more than 1.2 billion jobs are tied to ecosystems.^[2] More than 90% of global biodiversity has been lost in less than a century, with land use change and the destruction of natural habitats related to food production as major contributing factors. The major imbalances in our food production and consumption patterns are global challenges that are also reflected in the Nordic region.

The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023 (NNR2023) emphasise a predominantly plant-based diet, rich in vegetables, fruits, berries, whole grains and fish, with a limited intake of red meat and processed foods. However, actual consumption patterns in the Nordic countries do not reflect these recommendations. The intake of fruits and vegetables is significantly lower – in the range of one third to half the recommended amounts – while the intake of meat exceeds recommendations. Furthermore, the adoption of legumes and other plant proteins in everyday meals is moving very slowly.^[3] The impact of these patterns in combination with other factors is seen clearly in public health data across the Nordic countries, where rates of overweight and obesity among both children and adults are high. This, in turn, contributes to a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases.^{[4][5][6][7]}

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1. Wood, A., Gordon, L.J., Rööös, E., Karlsson, J.O., Häya, T., Bignet, V., Rydenstam, T., Hård af Segerstad, Bruckner, M. (2019). Nordic food systems for improved health and sustainability - baseline assessment to inform transformation. Stockholm Resilience Centre.
 2. Raes, L., Mittempergher, D., Piaggio, M. and Siikamäki, J. (2021). Nature-based Recovery can create jobs, deliver growth and provide value for nature. Technical Paper No. 3, IUCN Nature-based Recovery Initiative. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.
 3. Nordic Council of Ministers (2023). Nordic Nutrition Recommendations 2023 – Integrating Environmental Impacts. Nordic Co-operation
 4. Rööös, E., Larsson, J., Sahlin, K. R., Jonell, M., Lindahl, T., André, E., Säll, S., Harring, N., & Persson, M. (2021). Policy options for Sustainable Food Consumption - Review and Recommendations for Sweden. Mistra Sustainable Consumption report 1:10. Chalmers University of Technology.
 5. Jensen, H.A.R., Davidsen, M., Möller, S.R., Róman, J.E.I., Kragelund, K., Christensen, A.I. & Ekholm, O. (2022) Danskernes sundhed – Den Nationale Sundhedsprofil 2021. Sundhedsstyrelsen, København.
 6. Ministry of Health (2019). Health Policy: A policy for Iceland's health services until 2030. Government of Iceland, Ministry of Health.
 7. Norwegian Institute of Public Health (2023). Public Health Report.

[8] Finally, these dietary patterns do not sufficiently support the move towards lowering the carbon footprint of our meals.

Because the food system contributes substantially to the complex problems we face, reshaping it stands out as a powerful lever for building sustainable, competitive and resilient societies. To achieve this, action must be taken across several fronts.

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Local food is not just food for the stomach, it's food for the soul

Kim Kielsen, former Minister for Fisheries and Hunting, Greenland

Aims of the Nordic Food Innovation Summit:

To develop new partnerships and concrete solutions for a resilient, healthy and sustainable food system in order to:

- Reduce carbon footprint
- Improve health and well-being
- Increase biodiversity
- Strengthen local and regional food production
- Enhance Nordic competitiveness

8. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (2023). Lifestyle and Nutrition > Obesity. Link: <https://thl.fi/en/topics/lifestyles-and-nutrition/obesity> (accessed 26/11 2024).



AMBITIONS

The participants at the Nordic Food Innovation Summit set forth overall ambitions for future cross-Nordic collaborations. These ambitions, which are summarized and condensed below, not only reflect current shortcomings of our food systems, but also the great potential in reshaping them: Changing the way we produce and consume food represents one of the most effective courses of action to alleviate the challenges of today, including climate change, biodiversity loss and the health crisis.

The ambitions below are suggested as top priorities for the Nordic governments, NGOs and food system stakeholders in general. In the initiatives section, these are followed up by concrete proposals for steps that might be taken to meet them, developed at the Nordic Food Innovation Summit in December 2024.

1. End the waiting game on food policy and work towards a unified implementation of regulations

The current state of policy-making surrounding food production and consumption is sometimes described as a waiting game: New policies is one of the tools that can speed up the sustainable development of our food systems and guide consumer behaviour, but there is a stalemate where politicians are concerned about taking steps that might offend consumers and anger primary producers and the food industry in general. Conversely, primary producers, supermarket chains and other key stakeholders in the food space are waiting for the politicians to act. This waiting game needs to end. And the rate of progress needs to speed up radically. The initiatives section presents concrete steps for getting started on this path.

Another related factor that is holding back change is the lack of a common Nordic interpretation of the applicable EU regulations. We need broad Nordic alliances for action with representation from all relevant stakeholders to escape the stalemate and secure a unified and fair interpretation and implementation of EU regulations in the Nordics. Working together across the Nordics to move in the same direction will strengthen our overall progress and curb unfortunate effects such as increased border trade, which occurs when neighbouring countries diverge significantly on food tax policy.

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The problem is that compared to, let's say, the historic process of building the welfare state, in order to enter the green state or the sustainable state, we don't have 100 years to complete that transition. Our time span is very short; we must act now.

Rasmus Willig, Head of
Suhrs Højskole and
Chairperson of
Andelsgaarde, Denmark

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2. Further democratise the Nordic Food Movement

As shown by the [impact analysis of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto](#) (report in Danish), the success of the Nordic Food Movement has not impacted all parts of society equally. While the values of the New Nordic Kitchen Manifesto have become second nature to many chefs and have been influential abroad, we see trends, today, among ordinary consumers that point in the opposite direction. For instance, while locally sourced produce is championed in many of our top restaurants, there is a move towards *fewer* of our meals at home including local and regional ingredients in countries such as Denmark.^[9] Studies from Denmark show an increasing reluctance to spend time in the kitchen on a day-to-day basis, and a modest degree of involvement of children in the preparation of family meals.^[10]

The Nordic countries must prioritise efforts that can provide knowledge and skills and create opportunities to eat and cook in line with both sustainability goals and the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations for the general public. To achieve this, the challenge needs to be approached from many different angles, and a cross-Nordic collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experiences is a clear opportunity area. The initiatives section outlines a number of concrete suggestions to further this ambition.

9. Madkulturen (2023). Madkultur23 – Råvarer
10. Madkulturen (2022). Madkultur22 – Madlavning

3. Elevate diverse, sustainable food production and strengthen short supply chains

The idea of leveraging locally produced food that reflects the values of great taste, quality and sustainability is ingrained in the Nordic Food Movement. However, this ideal is only reflected to a limited extent in our food culture at large. One key reason being supply side shortcomings. Marketing, distribution/logistics, limited resources and profitability among small producers are some of the issues that undermine the integrity of our food culture.

There is a need to support and promote our region's small scale primary producers who are working tirelessly to put sustainable Nordic produce of high quality on our plates while struggling to maintain their position in the food economy. Small producers are integral to the health, resilience and potential of our Nordic food landscape and culture. They have the potential to play a key role in creating the connectedness to food, land and sea that we identify as crucial to sustainability, food security and good health. However, they face a number of disadvantages in getting their products onto plates. It must be easier for small producers to get their food to consumers. In turn there is a need to make it more convenient and attractive for consumers and food service to vote 'yes' to local and regional foods from small-scale production. Developing alternative marketing channels and forms of ownership, including the co-operative model, are important aspects of this effort that must be prioritised. A key area of focus is to work towards greater transparency and remove obstacles posed by de facto monopolies and problematic business practices, as outlined in more detail in the initiatives section.

Education programmes supporting new approaches in farming with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and greater collaboration in food production is a key area of opportunity. It would benefit the Nordic

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Today, even if you live in a fishing village in Iceland, it can be quite hard to buy fresh fish. To me, that means something is very broken.

Ragnar Eiríksson, Executive Chef, Brút Restaurant, Iceland

region to support more diversity and new approaches to educating farmers, including building bridges between the established players in primary production and small independent farmers and new small farm schools.

4. Rethink food education for children and youth

The Nordic countries have very different practices in place when it comes to food education for children and youth, from nursery to primary school and beyond. But there is a growing shared understanding that the current status quo is insufficient to achieve the needed sustainable and healthy transformation of our eating habits. Uplifting meals and, particularly, food education for our youngest members of society should be a top priority for both our governments and in civil society. A cross-Nordic collaboration and coordination is a fruitful new path to elevating this agenda. Importantly, a renewed focus on this vital area should take a bird's eye view and address food education across the time frame from when a child enters nursery school until they graduate from post-secondary school. An important focus in this effort would be to unlock the largely unrealised potential in working with farmers, fishermen, gardeners, chefs, businesses, cultural institutions etc. to conceive and implement holistic programmes for food education that reflect current needs, as outlined in more detail in the initiatives section.

5. Leverage cultural diversity

Over the past 20 years, the Nordic Food Movement has given us a confidence in Nordic food as a distinct cuisine, but the intention has never been to obscure the cultural and culinary diversity that flourishes in the Nordic countries today and enriches our collective food culture. People who have migrated to the Nordics have brought with them culinary wisdom that can enrich our food culture in multiple ways if properly tapped into. This represents a great resource and potential for engagement of people and communities. To name one example, the green transition on our plates is unlikely to succeed without the wisdom of the cuisines from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas, where centuries of cooking traditions have cracked the code to cooking flavourful food with modest use of meat. Just as we in the Nordics have a responsibility to preserve and learn from the culinary heritage of deeply rooted local cooking traditions that still prevail in our region, it is also crucial that we appreciate the invaluable contributions of minority groups that are expanding our food culture and working in kitchens and agriculture throughout the Nordics. Working conditions in these fields must be improved across the board.

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Food culture is what we eat on a Tuesday, not what we eat in fancy restaurants or what we cook when we want to impress our friends.

Andreas Viestad, Geitmyra
Matkultursenter for barn,
Norway



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Our food culture, along with the systems underpinning food production, represents the most critical domain where, both as individuals and as a civilization, we can transform our behavior to safeguard life on this planet as we know it.

Claus Meyer, Culinary entrepreneur



PROPOSED INITIATIVES OVERVIEW

The following initiatives were developed at the Nordic Food Innovation Summit on 3–4 December 2024 by the 65 participants. They are presented here as concrete proposals in line with the shared ambitions set forth above and in the spirit of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto



**1. Strategic
dialogue on
Nordic food policy**



**2. A Nordic
strategy for
transparency and
fairness in food
procurement**



**3. The No Menu
Movement**



4. An inspirational platform to activate role model agency



5. Cultural institutions reinvented as culinary centres



6. Design and implementation of a shared food literacy curriculum



7. Improved sustainability metrics



8. Action plan for public kitchens



9. The North Star – shining a light on sustainable, delicious products



10. A Nordic Food Council



1. Strategic dialogue on Nordic food policy

Following from the observation of a stalemate and a waiting game in food policy, as described above, we propose a strategic dialogue among key Nordic food actors with the goal to develop and agree on concrete food policy proposals. These suggestions are to be used to influence and push for effective and common public food policies in the Nordic region.

The first step is to set up a thought leader forum to develop a visionary, science-based set of recommendations for the necessary policy changes to urgently achieve a healthy and sustainable food system. Step two is, with the set of recommendations as a starting point, to establish a strategic dialogue among powerful food system stakeholders including farmers, producers, the food retail sector, researchers, advocacy groups and major NGOs. The aim is to develop a common policy framework for transforming the Nordic food system. Inspiration on how to structure the strategic dialogue can be gleaned from the strategic dialogue on the future of EU agriculture completed in 2024. In this case, the focus is broader – the food system as such, including consumer behaviour – while the geographic context is narrower – the Nordic countries.

Such a policy framework might include common consumption-based policies, e.g. implementing and streamlining health-related taxes to improve public health and avoid border trade; common changes to the CAP and other agricultural policies; investments in production and processing systems; and gastronomy investments in initiatives to change social norms and accelerate social tipping points. This project could be initiated and headed by the Nordic Council of Ministers with the goal of securing additional funding from foundations.

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We talk a lot about steering consumers. But we can also see policies as helping people. Helping with information, with prices, with opportunities.

Elin Rööf, Associate Professor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences



2. A Nordic strategy for transparency and fairness in food procurement

Many of the laws needed to curb monopolies and discrimination against local and regional suppliers are already in place. But there are issues with enforcement and transparency. To address this, a Nordic strategy to identify and address issues in the value chain is needed. Goals and tasks should include:

1. Mapping the value chain and identifying market obstacles for local and regional Nordic produce
2. Eliminating obstacles to use of local and regional Nordic foods in private procurement:
 - Ensuring significant transparency and accountability in procurement and sourcing
 - Ensuring compliance with EU anti-monopoly and -cartel legislation
3. Organising public procurement in ways that do not discriminate against local and regional suppliers
4. Ensuring easy access to local resources like seasonal fish by curbing the adverse effects of the organisation and sale of harvesting quotas

This work is complex and will require time and resources. But it is necessary if we are to bolster food security, defend the integrity of the food system and support the continued flourishing of the Nordic food culture. It is also doable: There are, for instance, encouraging cases from Norway regarding efforts to increase transparency in the supermarket sector.

We propose establishing a cross-Nordic working group to conduct an independent, in-depth review of the state-of-affairs in food procurement with the focus areas outlined above. The group should put forth recommendations for an improved practise to level the playing field and elevate sustainability, deliciousness and fairness.

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The food service sector in the Nordics is hampered by de facto monopolies and unsound business practices. These dynamics put both small-scale primary producers and kitchen operators – and ultimately all of us – at a disadvantage. We need to start addressing this problem head on.

Trine Hahnemann, Chef and Author, Denmark



3. The No Menu Movement

The No Menu Movement is a conceptual framework that aims to stimulate reflection on our relationship to food, farming and nature. Today, we expect to be able to access any ingredient from any part of the world on any given day. And when entering a restaurant, many expect a varied menu that allows us to choose what our hearts desire, irrespective of the costs of this abundance in terms of food waste, emissions from transportation, packaging and storage, etc.

With the No Menu Movement, we want to make things simpler – much simpler – for at least a space of time that’s long enough to make people think and to start conversations about more profound changes to our consumption habits.

The No Menu Movement is a programme anchored in one week a year across the Nordic countries. For this week, restaurants would sign up for a week with no menu, only a single meal cooked with simple seasonal ingredients, sourced from local/regional and preferably small producers, and offered at a fair price. Restaurants commit to zero food waste for the week, arranging for surplus meals to go to those in need, and using surplus ingredients in the kitchen. Accommodations for allergies and other pragmatic steps to make this an attractive experience for diners would, of course, be made, while keeping with the principles set forth above. Participating restaurants would be marketed through the No Menu Movement platform.

Leading up to and during this week, the association organising the No Menu programme would organise talks, debates and publish think pieces about the relationship between producers and kitchens and the issues we need to fix from farm to table.

We want to inspire guests to see their meal as more than just food on a plate. By increasing public awareness of how and where food is sourced, we aim to create ripple effects – sparking curiosity and changes in how people cook and think about food at home. At the same time, we aim to reinforce the bond between chefs and producers. The long-term aim is to encourage guests to ask questions and engage – turning curiosity into conversations about why flexibility

in sourcing is essential for sustainability. And to give small- and medium-sized producers greater access to the market by inspiring long-term close collaborations between kitchens and producers based on flexible sourcing.

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In my mind, the ideal menu is first conceived when you look in a seed catalogue. Later, it is designed based on the harvest calendar, and then usually changed by the weather.

Frida Nilsson, Partner and Executive Chef, Pensionat Furuhem, Sweden



4. An inspirational platform to activate role model agency

There is an emerging awareness of the need to actively strengthen knowledge, skills and opportunities to cook and eat delicious and healthy food at home. That is, meals that are in line with the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations but also compatible with the realities of a busy, modern life; and, perhaps above all, food that tastes great, so that you want to get back to the stove again tomorrow and the next day. There is no shortage of recipes to be found online, in magazines, books etc. But it requires a lot from the individual to navigate the landscape of shifting dietary trends and culinary ideals that may not work well for the ordinary home cook.

We propose creating an inspirational platform that, on a nutritionally sound basis, uses the joy of cooking and eating together as a lever to help ordinary people cook and eat sustainable, healthy and delicious food. As a collaboration across the Nordics, the platform would compile a shared base of content and a template to be adapted for each country and region in the relevant language.

The platform envisioned is digitally based but supported by a strong offline strategy. Crucially, the platform should enable role model agency to create communities of action. The platform should be anchored in local communities by enabling people to bring the content into everyday lives and community-building activities, for instance allowing people to sign up to receive recipe packages and participate in activities such as long-table meals, pop-up cooking classes, contests, and other activities developed through the platform. While the digital content would be the main track for the platform, a dynamic offline track is an important ingredient in setting a high bar for the potential impact that will make this platform stand out.

To ensure the reach and relevance of the platform, the content as well as the offline activities should be strategically presented by different subgroups, including chefs, celebrities, influencers and everyday role models. Part of the ground game for this initiative is the mapping of key actors in each region to be

tapped to create the content and headline activities. The content would build on digital success criteria, using viral hooks and storytelling to gain attention and inspire action. The platform should include an educational programme that can be used by schools and daycare institutions.

Important stakeholders include food and health departments in the Nordic countries, the educational ministries, and the Nordic Council of Ministers as a potential project owner.

The goals and potentially broad reach of an initiative of this kind warrant a consideration of whether funding might be secured through, for instance, a Nordic fee on plastic bags or a sugar tax.

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Positive social tipping points can be seen as ways in which the spread of ideas, attitudes and behaviours between people becomes self-reinforcing in ways that go beyond the initial intervention's design.

Rune Baastrup, Director, Democracy X, Denmark



5. Cultural institutions reinvented as culinary centres

Some traditional cultural institutions are struggling to find their place in an increasingly digital world. This presents an opportunity to rethink the use of these spaces and thus bolster their enduring relevance. Food – and the need for learning, cooking and enjoying food together – is a clear area of opportunity.

We propose a pioneering project to expand the function of existing cultural institutions to include a role as a local culinary centre in a way that harmonises with their current activities. Existing Nordic cultural centres, including those in Reykjavik, Torshavn and Nuuk, are clear candidates, but the potential in other types of institutions should be explored as well.

The library is an example of an institution in search of new ways to contribute to the communities in which they are situated. Even if, at first glance, food and cooking is not usually associated with the local library, this could be an exciting new dimension. Many libraries in larger towns and cities already have kitchen spaces connected to café settings. Others could be equipped with mobile units and/or have basic kitchen facilities built in. In its capacity as a culinary cultural centre – while of course still functioning as a library – it would organise a variety of activities: short cooking classes for adults, talks, long-table meals with local chefs and associations, classes for children in school and daycare, growing food in miniature gardens as school projects, assembling a cooking library, loaning out special cooking utensils to go with recipes (library-style), publishing a local food newsletter and organising events in collaboration with other cultural institutions, restaurants, shops and businesses.

We envision this as a pilot project with a number of cultural institutions, including Nordic cultural centres and selected libraries in some or all Nordic countries. A cross-Nordic team should be formed to help design and implement the concept which should be tailored to local contexts and facilities.

A network of culinary cultural centres across the Nordics could collaborate on various flagship projects. One such project, suggested as an initiative at the

summit, is an open-source database of our Nordic culinary heritage. This database, which users of the culinary centres are encouraged to contribute to, would compile traditional recipes and techniques from each country and region. They would then be made accessible to the public and used in education programmes. Such a database could, of course, also be created as a stand-alone initiative, not connected to culinary centres.



6. Design and implementation of a shared food literacy curriculum

Schools and daycare institutions serve as critical environments where children develop their understanding of food, learn – or don't learn – about healthy eating habits, and ultimately establish life-long dietary preferences. The offering of freshly cooked, high-quality meals in daycares and schools should be a top priority, but it is equally essential to prioritise food education. While there are some good practices in place in the Nordics to glean inspiration from, the overall picture is that food education is an area in need of much greater attention.

We propose a joint Nordic effort to develop a coherent food education programme and curriculum with a 14-year time span from nursery school to the end of lower secondary school (i.e. 9th or 10th grade), to be adopted by the Nordic governments. The goal of the programme should be for the children to attain a high level of food literacy, to achieve agency as consumers and to leverage food and cooking as a basis for social development and a subject matter for learning in other areas, including language, maths and biology with downstream effects like the improvement of dietary choices and health.

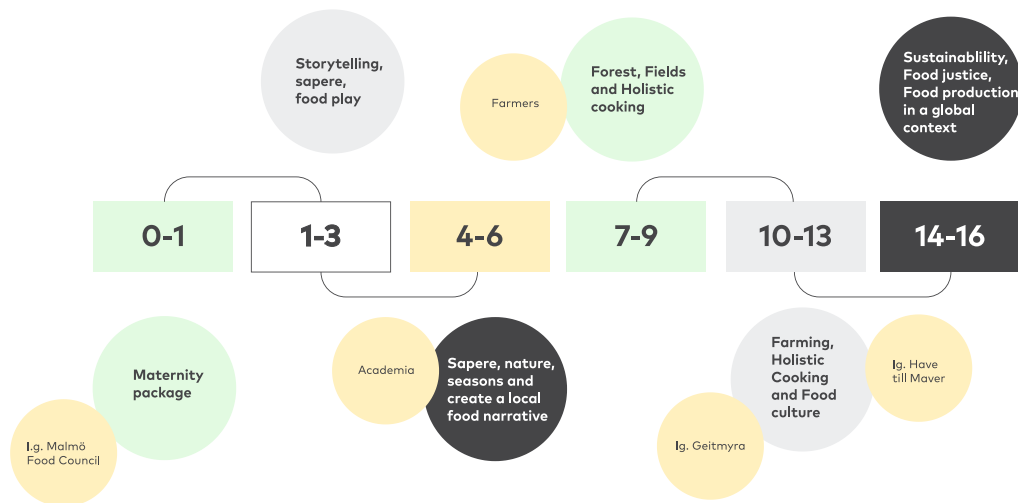
Key to the development and implementation of the programme and curriculum is a broad partnership that, in addition to the relevant academic partners, includes food producers and entrepreneurs, food activists, businesses and chefs that can chart the landscape to be experienced by children on the journey created by the programme.

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Literally everyone has a relationship with food. Whether you are a chef, or a parent putting meals on the table for your family, or a child trying to cook for the first time. Everyone can participate within their capacity. I believe food is a wonderful tool for change

Hanne-Lene Dahlgren, founder, Team Tomorrow, Norway

The vision is that every person growing up in the Nordic region ultimately has hands-on experience with many aspects of food production and cooking and obtains an understanding of the connection between people, the planet and food, with the aim that the next generation of Nordic citizens will eat better, be healthier and make more sustainable choices. Increased co-operation between the Nordic countries in this arena, including sharing best practices, will be crucial to the success of this initiative.





7. Improved sustainability metrics

Today, most kitchen operators in public institutions and large companies are both required to and motivated to make sustainable choices in food procurement. However, the process of defining and prioritising sustainability metrics is difficult territory for many. There is a risk of choosing a focus area or a metric that might be criticised as greenwashing or of overlooking essential concerns when trying to simplify the approach to sustainable sourcing. Many kitchens struggle with this.

There is a need for better guidance for kitchens on how to define and navigate sustainability in the context of their procurement. An initiative to define a holistic framework with a set number of indicators, including organic share, plant-animal share, seasonality and responsible production could alleviate this uncertainty. Such an initiative would not only help kitchens maximise the impact of their sustainability efforts, it would also be a tool to push for transparency in supply chains. This, in turn, could help minimise greenwashing. An important goal in this effort is to avoid a single-minded focus on one metric, for instance carbon footprint, while ignoring other essential concerns which may make well-intentioned actions unbalanced – even unsustainable.

For this purpose, a methodology must be developed to ensure validity within each indicator. Kitchens using such a framework would set individual goals within each indicator. The framework should be developed in such a way as to be compatible with SBTi, ESG and other international standards that a caterer may wish to or be required to comply with. Relevant stakeholder groups should be involved in defining indicators and a group of kitchens should be involved in a test phase to ensure the indicators are actionable in the context of running a professional kitchen. Some pioneering efforts to meet this need are already getting off the ground.

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When it comes to changing behaviour, convenience beats idealism most of the time. New arguments for change are needed, so organisations can acknowledge that they need to cover the cost of change. To get there, we need a better, more holistic, and less vulnerable framework for a truly sustainable and responsible practise.

Maximo Graesse, Changing Food, Norway



8. Action plan for public kitchens

Some public kitchens across the Nordic region already play a special role in driving the sector towards a more sustainable and healthier practice. Public kitchens have a unique standing. They are often adherent to guidelines and strategic goals set in a political context with a high expectance for compliance. This means that, if conditions are right, public meal providers – in wide-ranging settings such as schools, daycare institutions, cultural institutions, elder care homes and hospitals – can be particularly ambitious when it comes to sustainability, cooking according to dietary guidelines, sourcing locally and regionally, using meals as an educational setting, and other valuable goals. In other words, public kitchens can be leaders.

Taking on such a role is not something that just happens, however. Public kitchens generally face many challenges in terms of budgets, facilities, staffing and longstanding practices that can be difficult to change. In order to empower public kitchens to take on this role, we propose a cross-Nordic effort to develop an action plan for public kitchens to function as a common reference point and resource.

The action plan would provide clear guidance on feasible steps that can be taken in public kitchens to improve sustainability, seasonality, taste, health, hospitality, community and working conditions. The basis for the development of this is a compilation of best practices from pioneering efforts in different Nordic countries in combination with the NNR, the values of the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto as well as national sustainability goals. The action plan should be endorsed by the Nordic governments.

Relevant stakeholders and partners involved in realising this initiative include governments, trade unions, industry associations, agricultural and aquaculture associations, NGOs and companies working with consulting in the kitchen industry, culinary schools, and training programmes.

The implementation of the plan should be supported by educational programmes in the individual countries.



9. The North Star – shining a light on sustainable, delicious products

There are many role models for sustainable, high-quality food production in the Nordics and many exciting developments. However, there is a need for strengthening the Nordic collaboration around sustainable principles, both within our region and abroad.

In southern Europe, government-backed classification schemes and labels such as *Label Rouge*, *AOC*, *Produits de montagne* and the like help raise the level of transparency and quality consciousness in the marketplace. This ultimately helps smaller producers scale their production and favours innovation and diversity. In the Nordics, we have yet to implement similar schemes.

We propose the development of a set of principles and a network to support them. We call this The North Star of food production. Its aim is to create a common understanding among primary producers in the Nordic countries that can, like the North Star did for the sailors, guide those who strive to improve the Nordic food sector. As a certification scheme, such an initiative would strengthen the Nordic brand and position within the region and abroad.

We suggest engaging agricultural and fishery organisations, national politicians and academia, through the Nordic Council of Ministers, in the development of a set of guiding principles and standards, using the Nordic Kitchen Manifesto as a starting point and encompassing values such as taste, circularity, animal welfare, and a distinct connection to the Nordic climate, landscapes, plant and animal varieties and/or farming and culinary traditions. An important focus when defining the specific principles would be to set clear criteria that, on the one hand, amount to a key seal of approval, something that sets North Star products apart, while on the other hand remaining inclusive enough to gain a broad foothold in the Nordic food landscape. The intention is not to create a luxury label.

The guiding principles should form a basis for a certification scheme for producers, allowing them to market products under the North Star. To ensure the impact of this initiative, we propose establishing financial support to ensure the principles thrive and are implemented, as well as establishing a Nordic collaborative network among North Star primary producers – and those aspiring to the standard. Through this network, producers would be able to pitch ideas on how to target sustainable, circular production of high-quality Nordic ingredients and products. Ideally, the North Star scheme would include a research initiative to define and describe sensory qualities associated with the local *terroir* and specific varieties of produce distinct to different areas in our region using the French AOC as a template.

This would help establish the Nordics as a distinct food-producing region and a global leader on food quality, beyond just sustainability. The North Star would strengthen the Nordic brand both locally and for export markets, improving understanding, trust and collaboration within our region. A successful implementation of this initiative would improve economic and environmental sustainability for the small-scale, local primary producers and ensure increased access to these delicious products for consumers in the Nordic countries and abroad, thus boosting Nordic competitiveness.

Government backing for the development process outlined above and the continued stewardship of the certification and label scheme would ensure independence and legitimacy, following the example of schemes such as *Label Rouge*. It could be viewed as an investment in Nordic competitiveness.

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Transitioning the food system is, on the one hand, a zero-sum game. Power, land and resources have to be redistributed. But on the other hand, this cultural and social innovation is a chance for immense growth in a sense of belonging and caretaking of this planet.

Sarah Hellebek, Vice-head of Krogerup Højskole, Denmark



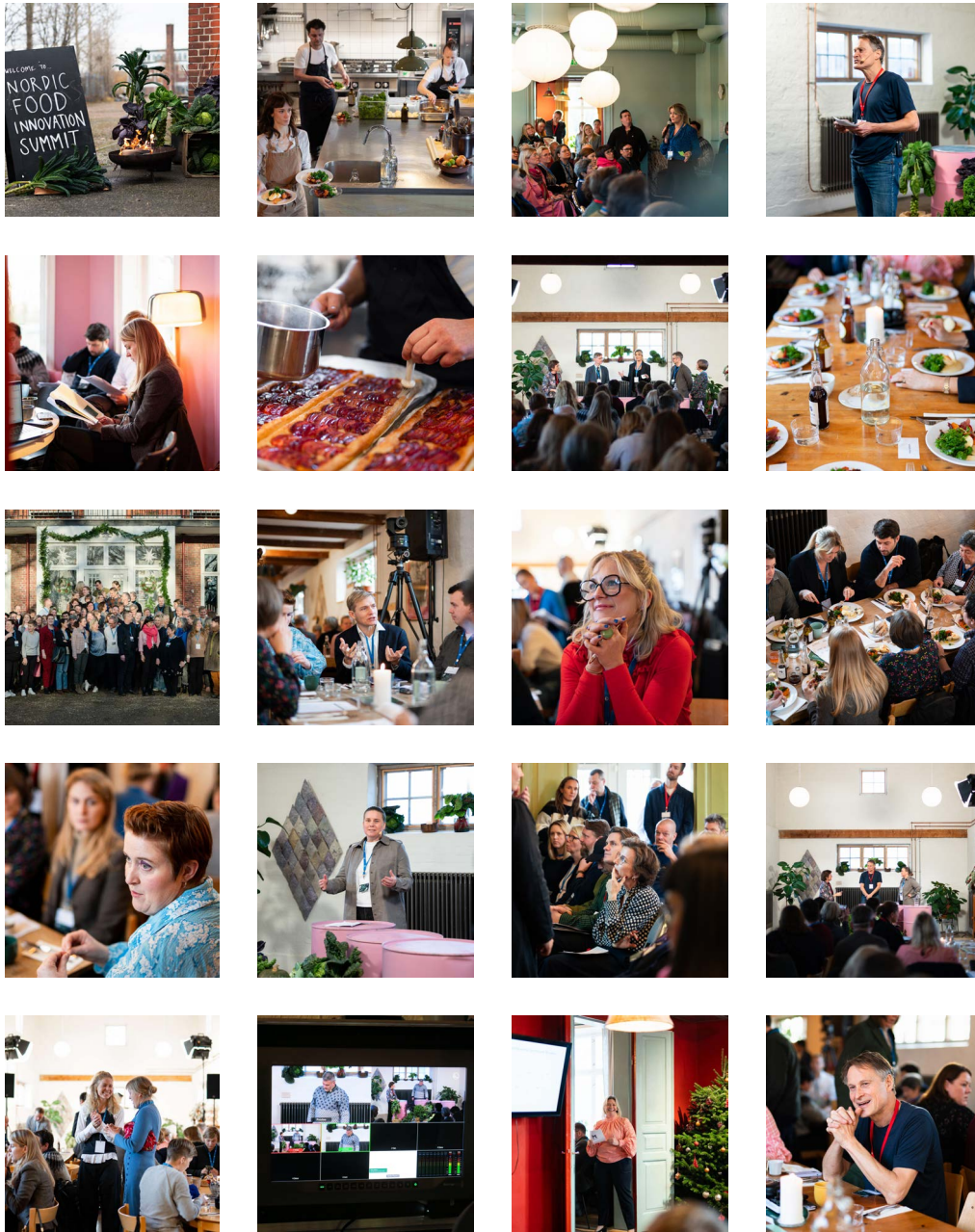
10. A Nordic Food Council

To provide stewardship and facilitate collaboration across the Nordics on the important future tasks we face, and on any concrete initiatives that span across borders, we propose establishing a Nordic Food Council with broad representation across the Nordic food landscape, from civil society to academia and the food system.

The council should have equal representation across the Nordic region and assemble the deepest and widest knowledge base about food through an open and transparent nomination process.

Leveraging its collective knowledge, experience and agency, the Nordic Food Council should have the capacity and be given a mandate to initiate collaborations between key stakeholders across the Nordic Food Landscape. Additionally, the council would serve in an advisory capacity to the Nordic Council of Ministers and to any alliances and groups working on the design and implementation of regional initiatives, including but not limited to the ambitions and initiatives presented in this publication.

The exact mandate and modus operandum of this council is to be defined further but it's scope could potentially encompass assessing the feasibility of proposed initiatives, recommending and or initiating action; conducting reviews and support for ongoing projects; and facilitating the sharing of knowledge and best practice in effecting the desired transformations in our food system and culture. The council could be a forum for upscaling and proliferating initiatives that can find new places to grow in the Nordics



[Link to more images](https://www.skyfish.com/p/nordisksamarbejde/2498612)

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Appendix

Participants at the Nordic Food Innovation Summit 3rd.–4th. December 2024

Albert Franch Sunyer	Restaurateur	Restaurant Nolla	Finland
Anders Højlund Kazimierski	Development Director	Arkaia Foundation	Denmark
Andreas Sundgren	Founder	Brännland Cider	Sweden
Andreas Viestad	Founder	Geitmyra matkultursenter for barn	Norway
Anna Kaijser	Director of small scale food production	Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund	Sweden
Anna Nordlund-Gustafsson	CFO	Ålands Centralandelslag, ÅCA	Åland
Astrid Regine Næsslander	Chef and business owner	HØST matverksted	Norway
Aviåja Lyberth Hauptmann	Associate Professor	Ilisimatusarfik and University of Copenhagen	Greenland
Cindie Christiansen	Founder & Director	Foodprint Nordic	Denmark
David Cohen	Winemaker & Founder	Ainoa Winery	Finland
Dora Svavarsdóttir	Chef & teacher	Slow Food Reykjavik	Iceland
Eivind Løvdal	Manager	Geitmyra matkultursenter for barn	Norway
Elin Rööös	Associate Professor	SLU	Sweden
Elina Vauhkonen	Organic farmer	Kalliolan luomu	Finland
Ellen Alma Tryggvadóttir	Nutritionist Ph.D.	City of Reykjavik	Iceland

Ellen Rydbeck	Farmer	Suontaka farm	Finland
Emilie Hansted Berning	Co-founder	Vild Hvede	Denmark
Emilie Qvist Kjærgaard	Chef	Hotel og Restaurantskolen	Denmark
Eva Michelsen	Entrepreneur	Eldstæðið ehf	Iceland
Fanney Dora Sigurjonsdottir	Chef	SV veitingar	Iceland
Frida Nilsson	Partner, Executive Chef	Pensionat Furuhem	Sweden
Gísli Matthías Auðunsson	Head chef & owner	Slippurinn, Skál & Næs	Iceland
Gutti Winther	Chef and entrepreneur	Sp/f Gutti	Faroe Islands
Halvar Ellingsen	Co owner - founder	Kvitnes Gård	Norway
Hanne-Lene Dahlgren	Sustainability influencer	Team Tomorrow	Norway
Harriet Strandvik	Pedagogie magister	Verksamhetsledare, Mathantverkarna	Åland
Heidi Bjerkan	Chef	Credo	Norway
Henri Alen	Restaurateur	Finnjäväl restaurant	Finland
Hilde Solheim	Jury leader	Local Food Entrepreneur of The Year	Norway
Inunnguaq Hegelund	Chef	Arctic Food By I	Greenland
Ivaq Kriegel	CEO	Katuaq	Greenland
Jesper Johansson	Rektor	Restaurangakademien	Sweden
Joakim Parkkonen	Owner	Restateam Restaurants	Finland
Johanna Dahlgren	Restaurant manager	Stallhagen AB	Åland
Jukka Kajan	Consultant	Food & Comms	Finland

Kaisa Myllykangas	Food Advisor	Rural Women's Advisory Organisation of Oulu	Finland
Katja Johanna Tuomainen	Team manager	Culinary Team Finland	Finland
Kine Bekkengen	Project manager	Geitmyra Matkultursenter for barn	Norway
Kirsi Vartia	Food and Tourism specialist	Savonia applied university	Finland
Kristina Sundell	Professor	University of Gothenburg	Sweden
Linda Dahl	Food writer and project manager	Matkaravan & Malmö Food Council	Sweden
Lisa Lemke	CEO	Lisa Lemke AB	Sweden
Louise Køster	CEO	Rabarbergaarden	Denmark
Maria Lyager Jacobsen	Gardener	Miðstovugarður	Faroe Islands
Marie Gidlund	Verksamhetsledare	Sweden Food Arena	Sweden
Marie-Louise Boisen Lendal	CEO	Tænketanken Frej	Denmark
Mathias Kumlin	Vocational teacher / Head Chef / Innovator	Ålands Yrkesgymnasium	Åland
Mathilde Walter Clark	Forfatter	Forfatter	Denmark
Maximo Græsse	Founder	Dagens	Norway
Mikko Humpi	Product developer	HKFoods Oyj	Finland
Napaartoq Petrussen	Owner	Sassuma Sea Salt	Greenland
Ola Hedstein	Partner & founder	Rethink Food	Norway
Olga Grönvall Lund	Founder and General Secretary	Reformaten	Sweden
Piia Mikonsaari	Project Manager	South-Eastern Finland University	Finland
Ragnar Eiríksson	Executive chef	Brút Restaurant	Iceland

Rikard Korkman	Senior Advisor	Centralförbundet för Sveriges lantbruksproducenter (SLC)	Finland
Rune Baastrup	Director	Democracy X	Denmark
Sarah Hellebek	Vice principal	Krogerup Højskole	Denmark
Sébastien Boudet	Baker	Brödpassion AB	Sweden
Sunniva Gudmundsdóttir Mortensen	Food communicator and educator	Matkovin	Faroe Islands
Søren Ejlersen	CoFounder	Aarstiderne	Denmark
Toni Toivanen	Chef and partner	Popl Burger	Finland
Trine Hahneemann	Chef, food writer and entrepreneur	Trine Hahneemann	Denmark
Trine Krebs	Green Boss/Grøn Sjæf	Food Organisation of Denmark	Denmark

About this publication

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This report summarizes takeaways from the the Nordic Food Innovation Summit. These are built on the participants' discussions and recommendations and put together by Jonas Winge Leisner, Meyers Madhus, and Camilla From, Madkulturen.

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

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The Nordic Council of Ministers

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